

The University of Chicago

AN INVESTIGATION
INTO MORAL SITUATIONS AND
CONCEPTS OF JUNIOR HIGH
SCHOOL PUPILS

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR
OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

1933

By
SADAO ARAI

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I. THE PROBLEM

This investigation was designed to discover (1) moral situations and concepts dealt with in English literature textbooks for junior high schools, and (2) how far these situations and concepts are significant to junior high school pupils and their teachers.

II. THE SOURCES OF THE MATERIAL AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

A. Moral Situations and Concepts in English Literature Textbooks

The field of textbook literature was investigated and the following six of the most representative volumes were selected for analysis. They are:

Lyman-Hill, Literature and Living, 1925
Haggerty, M.E., Reading in Literature, 1927
Greenlaw-Stratton, Literature and Life, 1922
Engleman-McTurnan, Guide Books to Literature, 1925
Elson-Keck-Burris, Junior High School Literature, 1928
Bolenius, E.M., Literature in the Junior High School, 1927

The criterion for judging moral situations and classifying them under different concepts was an agreement by two adult readers as to what moral quality or qualities a story would cause to emerge in their minds. In order to analyze and evaluate each situation, the following weighted values were chosen:

(a) those moral qualities which seemed to be of primary concern to a junior high school student were given a value of 3; (b) those of secondary concern were given a value of 2; and (c) those of incidental concern were given a value of 1. Besides these weighted

criteria, the number of pages devoted to discussion of each moral quality was recorded. The specific situations were recorded under each concept in the following form:

Column 1	Brief statement of specific situation
" 2	Weighted values of 3, 2, or 1
" 3	Number of pages occupied
" 4	Indication of author with inclusive number of pages
" 5	Key letter (KL) corresponding to summary classification which will be described in the following lines

In order to interpret the meaning of these situations given by the writers in the textbooks, it was found advisable (a) to define each moral concept in light of these specific situations, and (b) to classify them into general situations under each concept. The classification was done on the basis (a) of definitions of general situations, as general or abstract references rather than specific or particular references, and (b) of identical or similar references in situations from the standpoint of major content, category, or factor in the statement of the response. The general situations were recorded in the following form, to take the general situations of courage as an illustration:

KL	Sp.S.	General Situation	Value	Per- cent- age	Pages	Per- cent- age
a	10	Conquering natural environment	24	14.28	56	30.27
b	9	Rescuing person from danger	21	12.50	21	11.35
c	35	Facing danger connected with occupation	90	53.57	58	31.35
d	8	Facing personal loss	18	10.71	31	16.75
e	5	Assertion of moral principle	15	8.92	19	10.27
	67		168		185	

In the above summary, column KL means key letter, which corresponds to the list of specific situations; column Sp.S. means the number of specific situations included in the general situations; in the third column a brief statement of the general situations is recorded; column of value includes the weighted

values of the specific situations included in each category, and its percentage; and in the last column, the total number of pages devoted to discussion of a quality in the textbooks and percentage is given.

The 254 specific situations (Sp.S.) were classified under twenty-five moral concepts, and fifty-six general situations (Gen.S.). They are summarized as follows:

Concepts	Value of Sp.S.	Per- cent- age	Pages in Books	Per- cent- age	No. of Sp.S.	No. of Gen.S.
1. Courage	168	26.54	185	19.70	67	5
2. Service	120	18.95	189	20.12	42	4
3. Kindness	55	8.68	75	7.98	26	4
4. Industry	35	5.52	71	7.56	13	3
5. Self-confidence	28	4.40	51	5.43	12	2
6. Thrift	32	5.05	42	4.47	11	3
7. Persistence	26	4.10	40	4.25	9	3
8. Loyalty	10	3.00	40	4.25	9	3
9. Honesty	27	4.26	30	3.19	15	5
10. Patience	12	1.89	51	5.43	5	2
Total of first 10 concepts	522	82.39	774	82.38	202	34
11. Resourcefulness	13		35		5	1
12. Justice	12		26		6	3
13. Temperance	15		18		5	2
14. Initiative	12		18		5	2
15. Love	14		8		6	2
16. Modesty	12		11		9	1
17. Common-sense	3		9		1	1
18. Sportsmanship	7		9		3	2
19. Co-operation	7		9		3	1
20. Gratitude	6		3		2	1
21. Unselfishness	3		10		2	2
22. Thoroughness	3		5		1	1
23. Self-control	2		2		2	1
24. Obedience	2		1		1	1
25. Honor	2		1		1	1
Total of last 15 concepts	113	17.78	165	17.57	52	22

As seen in the above summary, the first ten of the twenty-five concepts, as far as emphasis measured by the proposed technique of evaluation is concerned, represent 82.39 per cent of the moral teaching values of the stories, and 82.38 per cent

of the total number of pages occupied in the texts. The technique of evaluation corresponds closely to the space devoted to moral qualities in the textbooks.

Two hundred and two specific situations under the first ten concepts were again classified (1) according to the areas, such as personal, home, school, local community, state and national, and international in terms of percentages of the total weighted values, and (2) by factors, including such activities as the educational, family, vocational, economic, civic, etc. which modify group relations.

B. Pupils' Reactions to General Moral Concepts

Those whose reactions to moral concepts were studied were 458 high school students in the city of Denver, Colorado during September to November, 1931. The distribution of the pupils is as follows:

Grade	Boys	Girls	Total
11th	43	43	86
9th	33	33	66
8th	65	70	136
7th	47	43	90
5th	41	40	81
Grand Total			458

These pupils were enrolled in East Denver High, Morey Junior High, and Moore Grade School, which are located in a triangular relationship in the center of the community of East Denver. The East Denver community is quite a representative American community from the standpoint of parents' occupation, birthplace of parents, racial distribution, and types of homes.

The Denver schools were selected because of the fact that the investigator was working in this city during the summer of 1931, and found readiness on the part of the research department

of that Board of Education to further his study.

Besides the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, the fifth and eleventh grades were chosen for a comparative study purpose. The eleventh grade students were chosen by picking a few from each home room group; the junior high school pupils were taken from the social sciences classes; and the fifth graders were chosen from two home room groups out of three in which the entire fifth grade class was divided alphabetically.

For collecting the pupils' reactions, a technique of the group free association type, which somewhat resembled that used by Shaffer,¹ was developed by the investigator. The technique in its essence, consists of presenting a moral concept as a stimulus word, both orally and visually, to classes of twenty-seven to thirty-eight pupils, to which each pupil in the class is requested to write down his mental reactions, or recall his personal experiences within a time limit of three minutes. The study of the pupils' reactions was definitely limited to the first ten moral words out of the twenty-five found to be most frequently described in the textbooks. For the scoring of responses under each stimulus word, the following simple criteria and numerical values were determined:

Value	Criterion
2	To every response which brings out a different category or belongs to a distinctive general situation
1	To every response which is a phase of the same category or general situation previously mentioned
0	To meaningless responses
0	To confused or vague responses
0	To responses of misconceptions
0	To no responses

The results were then checked with (1) re-testing of the same

L.F. Shaffer, "The Measurement of Children's Concepts," Journal of Educational Psychology, 1928, 19:41-44.

pupils after a four weeks interval, which showed a correlation coefficient of $.83 \pm .011$, and (2) with the personal interview scores of forty-five pupils picked at random, one out of each ten of the pupils who took the group test, which showed $r = .81 \pm .033$.

The responses of the 50 fifth graders, 125 eighth grade pupils, and 50 eleventh graders were carefully tabulated and then classified by agreement of two adults acquainted with these age groups, into general situations in a similar manner to what was done in the study of the textbooks. The classifications were further checked by five critically minded graduate students of Religious Education. The first ten most frequent specific responses, taking the eighth grade as the norm, to each of the ten concepts, and the classified general situations of all the responses to respective concepts were presented in percentages of the total frequency of all responses in the following form, taking courage as an illustration:

Courage Situations	Percentage by Grade		
	5th	8th	11th
Original Responses:			
1. In a game	10.37	9.52	3.90
2. In doing school studies	10.37	6.44	6.82
3. In swimming	5.66	4.76	3.90
4. In telling the truth	8.49	4.28	2.92
5. Talking before a large audience	.94	3.80	6.82
6. In an accident	7.54	3.09	5.36
7. In playing football	----	2.85	4.39
8. In taking punishment	----	2.85	.48
9. In danger in mountains	8.49	2.61	2.43
10. In climbing a cliff	5.66	2.61	3.41
Fifty-eight other situations	42.45	42.85	59.51
General Situations:			
1. Facing problems of school life	12.26	36.66	14.18
2. Assertion of moral principle	10.37	26.90	41.95
3. Conquering natural environment	33.01	14.76	11.22
4. Rescuing person from danger	18.86	10.09	8.29
5. Facing personal loss	1.88	6.49	2.92
6. Facing human physical fear	8.48	3.09	3.90
7. Facing danger connected with occupation	----	1.18	----
8. Facing social problems	----	.71	.97

The ten most frequent type reactions, together with the rest of the reactions (listed in Appendix B),¹ and the general situations were diagnostically examined (presented in Chapter III).

The differences in reactions of the fifth, eighth, and eleventh grade pupils were studied through a further treatment of the original reactions in several different ways, (1) the effect of maturity and experience upon the range or areas of their experiences and factors in the responses associated with their moral concepts were expressed in terms of percentages based on the frequency of responses; (2) the degrees of specificity, medium specificity, and generality in the reactions evoked were also expressed in percentages of frequency; and (3) the coefficient of correlation between scores of the pupils' reactions to the moral words and their intelligence quotient measured by Terman's Group Test of Mental Ability, their moral knowledge measured with the Information Test developed in connection with the Character Education Inquiry, and their sociability measured by their own teachers with a rating technique developed by J.S. Hsia.² These studies were presented in Chapter IV.

C. Teachers' Judgments on General Moral Situations

The judgments of 124 junior high school teachers on the general moral situations involved in the textbooks were studied at the same time as the pupils' reactions to the moral concepts. Of these teachers, twenty-four were men, who had an average teaching experience or contact with junior high school age of more

¹The appendix and chapters referred to are in the complete dissertation, to be found only in the University of Chicago libraries.

²J.S. Hsia, A Study of the Sociability of Elementary School Children (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), p. 23.

than six years. The rest were women teachers with an average of seven years and five months experience. In order to obtain an estimate as to how these teachers regarded the situations involved in the textbooks, ranking check lists were sent out and collected through the assistant director of the Research Department of Denver Public Schools. The instrument was based entirely upon the general situations found in each of the ten most frequently described concepts in the textbooks. A part of the directions in the ranking check list state:

Check in order of importance (1.2.3.) the general situations suggested below which seem to you usually most significant in the lives of boys and girls of junior high school age (12-14) for causing the moral qualities named in each section to arise. (If you think of better general situations for that age group under the specific moral qualities, write them on the dotted lines at the end, and include them when marking.)

The judgments were tabulated and a weighted value of 3 was given to every first choice and a value of 2 to every second choice of each general situation under each moral concept. The remaining choices were discarded. The scores were then expressed in terms of percentages as shown in the courage situations below: (Those situations added by the teachers are indicated by *)

Order of Choice	General Courage Situations	Score	Percentage
1.	Assertion of moral principle	216	34.29
2.	Conquering natural environment	163	29.06
3.	Facing personal loss	106	16.82
4.	Rescuing person from danger	83	13.17
5.	Facing danger connected with occupation	26	4.12
6.	*Facing difficult home situation	8	1.27
7.	*Facing an audience	6	.95
8.	*Ability to bear physical pain	2	.31

The teachers' preference order of the general situations in each of the ten moral concepts was then examined (Chapter V).

D. A Comparative Study of Moral Situations

A comparison of relationships of the findings of the general moral situations in the textbooks, of the pupils' reported experiences as they reacted to the moral concepts found in the textbooks, and of the teachers' judgments on the general moral situations of the textbooks was made on the basis of the percentages of the general situations under each of the ten moral concepts.

Let us take the courage situations for an illustration:

I Courage Rankings:

Order	General Situation	Percentage		
		Pupils	Books	Teachers
1.	Facing problems of school life	36.66	----	----
2.	Assertion of moral principle	26.90	8.92	34.02
3.	Conquering natural environment	14.76	14.28	29.05
4.	Rescuing person from danger	10.09	12.50	13.50
5.	Facing personal loss	6.49	10.71	16.82
6.	Facing human physical fear	3.09	----	.03
7.	Facing danger connected with occupation	1.18	53.57	4.12
8.	Facing social problems	.71	----	.95
9.	Facing difficult home situations	----	----	1.27

In the above courage rankings, (1) the textbooks have five general situations in which each situation has a percentage based on the sum of weighted values of specific situations; (2) the 420 original courage responses of 125 eighth grade pupils are classified into eight general situations whose percentage is based on the frequency of responses; and (3) the 124 teachers add three more general situations to that of the textbooks which were suggested to them and ranked the eight situations according to their judgments in the order of importance. The comparative placement of situations under each moral concept were interpreted and discussed.

In addition to these presentations and diagnoses, the areas and factors of the specific situations of the textbooks

were compared, on the basis of percentages, with those found in the original responses of the 125 eighth grade pupils.

III. SUMMARY CONCLUSION

The results of the investigation justify the following conclusions:

A. In the Study of Textbooks

1. The order of the categories of the most frequently used moral situations as classified under moral concepts is, courage, service, kindness, industry, self-confidence, thrift, persistence, loyalty, honesty, and patience. The ten concepts include a total of 202 specific situations out of 254 found in the textbooks. These are further classified into 34 general situations.

2. Fifteen more concepts cover the 52 specific situations which are also grouped under 22 general situations.

3. Most of the specific situations of the books are in the broader areas of human life such as the work or occupation group in local community life, the national or international relations group rather than in the narrower areas of home or school life.

4. The dominant factors which condition the specific moral situations are first, vocational, to which nearly forty per cent of the situations belong, second economic, and then civic. No attention is paid by these textbook writers to such factors as religion, health, and aesthetic activities.

B. In the Pupils' Reactions to Moral Concepts

1. A few type responses are repeated by the majority of the pupils, which is probably due to a similarity in their exper-

iences. On the average of 125 eighth grade pupils, 65.52 per cent of the total number of responses fall, in respect to each of the ten concepts, in the first ten most frequently repeated responses.

2. The responses, as indicated in the contents of the general situations, have a wide variety even though the majority pile up in a few categories. The reactions to the concepts, kindness, self-confidence, and thrift involve the smallest number of general situations with four each; and honesty the largest number with nine different general situations.

3. The increment ratio of the widening responses in the areas of experience from the home to the school and then to the community is proportional to the advance in grades from the fifth to eleventh grade.

4. The factors which seem to condition the pupils' experiences are, in order, the educational, family and parenthood, personal conduct, economic, friendships activities. In the fifth grade, the family and parenthood, and the educational factors are most prominent, but in the eighth and eleventh grades, the educational factor is the most dominant activity, while the home and parenthood factor seems to almost disappear from the eleventh grade responses, and the factors of recreation, friendship and personal conduct increase. In the factor of friendship in the upper grades, including the eighth, ninth, and eleventh grades, the boy and girl relationship is introduced.

5. There is a definite indication to recall more general moral situations than specific moral references when the pupils are stimulated by moral concepts. In fact, only 17.17 per cent of the total responses of 50 fifth grade, 125 eighth grade, and 50 eleventh grade pupils are of the specific nature, 41.10 per cent of medium specificity, and 41.73 per cent of general responses,

although specific situations were definitely requested. From these facts, we conclude that under ordinary circumstances, general situations seem to characterize the reactions of junior high school pupils rather than specific references. In other words, general situations seem to serve as directives or determinatives upon pupils' behavior rather than specific references. This finding agrees with Cantril's¹ recent discovery in the case of college students.

6. There is also a tendency, though very slight, for the fifth graders to recall more specific references than the eighth grade students. This tendency is reversed in the case of general references. Presumably this tendency is due to (1) the narrowness of areas and limited factors in the situations of the fifth grade pupils, or (2) the degree of maturity, both mentally and physically, of the older students. Again this finding agrees with Cantril's discovery with college students.

7. The increment ratio of the number of responses is proportional to the advance in grades and the decrement ratio of the number of no responses, meaningless or misconceived responses is also proportional to the advancement in grade. This is probably due to (1) the inability of the lower grade pupils to grasp the meaning of the stimulus words used or less readiness to recall their experiences, or (2) the growing experience and ability to appreciate moral situations on the part of the older students.

8. The correlation coefficient between the moral situation with moral knowledge is .59. The moral situation with the intelligence quotient is indicated by $r = .30 \pm .048$, and with sociability $r = .30 \pm .047$. To react to moral stimulus words in itself is a complicated mental activity in which undoubtedly

¹H. Cantril, General and Specific Attitudes, Psychological Monograph, XLII (Princeton: The Psychological Review Co., 1931-32).

innumerable factors influence, and in which none plays an exclusive role. For this reason, these correlation coefficients indicate, though to a slight and limited degree, that these factors are influential on the perception and recall of moral experiences.

C. In the Teachers' Judgments on Moral Situations

1. The teachers' rankings on moral situations differ from that of the books, and the variety of general situations increase. Twenty more situations are added to the thirty-four suggested general situations.

2. An examination of those added situations and of the preference order indicate that the teachers' judgments are more practical and closer to the pupils' everyday conduct situations than the imaginary, but colorful situations of the books.

3. The teachers' criticisms seem to indicate that (1) specific situations rather than general are highly desirable materials for the teaching of moral qualities, and (2) the situations in the books are more or less remote or as yet unexperienced situations for the junior high school age.

D. In the Comparative Study of Moral Situations

1. Most of the moral situations in the books are not practical, but more of a romantic, imaginary, and heroic nature. On the other hand, the pupils' responses show interest in immediate situations confronting them in everyday life. The teachers hold a midpoint position between the two.

2. Under these ten moral concepts, the books deal with situations classified under 34 general situations, the pupils 60, and the teachers 54. Evidently, the textbooks as source material to offer solutions of situations confronted by the pupils are insufficient.

3. A comparative study of the rankings of general situations show that the situations in the books have only a remote concern for the pupils of junior high school age, being made up of materials, wishes, and ideals from the adult world, and not from that of growing persons. On the other hand, the situations of the pupils clearly indicate their needs and interests in their everyday situations. With a few exceptions, the majority of the teachers hold a middle position, with a slight tendency to support the textbook situations rather than that of the pupils. This last conclusion is supported by results of a further investigation of specific situations of the books and the original responses of the eighth grade pupils, from the standpoints of areas in which these situations were experienced, and the factors which condition the experiences. The data are as follows:

a. Most of the situations of the books are first of all experiences of adult work in the local community where living is earned and life work carried on; second, experiences of international goodwill; and then of personal conduct. The majority of the pupils' situations are found in the school, the home, in personal conduct, and then in the play group.

b. The most important and dominant factors in the books' situations are first, occupational activities, economic, civic, etc., in the pupils' reactions the educational, parenthood and home, personal activities, and the economic factors are given in order of frequency.

The meaning of this conclusion is that the difference between the materials in the textbooks ordinarily used for character education in English literature and the pupils' situations is too radical for the growing person to be able to get light from such source materials in the solution of their own particular problems.

